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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001586

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [NE](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOISTS SEE "IMPERIALIST DESIGN" IN
NEGOTIATION PROCESS

REF: A. KATHMANDU 1577

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 1565

Classified By: AMB. MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI. REASON: 1.5 (B,D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The Government of Nepal's (GON) lead negotiator, Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, told the Ambassador that Maoist negotiators were unwilling to discuss any of the GON's political reform proposals during the third round of talks held August 17-18. Instead, Maoist negotiator Dr. Baburam Bhattarai denounced GON efforts to engage in confidence-building measures as an "imperialist design" instigated by foreign powers. Despite the "tremendous gap" between GON and Maoist positions, both sides agreed to touch base with one another after seven days. Lohani said the GON was "taken aback" by the Maoists' categorical refusal to discuss anything short of the GON's complete capitulation on the issue of the constituent assembly. Whether the Maoists decide to stay in the talks will depend, Lohani said, on pressure from civil society for negotiations to continue. End summary.

MAOISTS' "ONE-POINT PERSPECTIVE"

[1](#)2. (C) On August 21 Finance Minister and lead Government of Nepal (GON) negotiator, Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, called the Ambassador to offer a quick readout of the August 17-18 negotiating sessions with the Maoists (Reftels). (The Ambassador will have a longer meeting with time for more thorough discussions with Lohani's fellow negotiator, Information Minister Kamal Thapa, on August 25.) Lohani reported that the Maoists refused to discuss any of the GON's political reform proposals during either of the two sessions, reiterating repeatedly that they were prepared to talk only about the constituent assembly. "They expected us to surrender completely" on that point, Lohani said, adding that he told them, "The Government did not come here to surrender." Rather than tackling controversial issues like the constituent assembly first, the normal negotiating process is for the two sides to examine the GON's proposed agenda for reform and identify areas of common concern where they could work together, he told his Maoist interlocutors.

[1](#)3. (C) Chief Maoist negotiator Dr. Baburam Bhattarai retorted that the "normal negotiating process" Lohani described is an "imperialist design" forwarded by foreign forces. He demanded that the two sides discuss "political issues" before any other topic. Lohani replied that the GON's proposals for constitutional reform fall under the category of "political issues," and again invited the Maoist negotiators to identify topics within GON parameters (that do not compromise the constitutional monarchy, multi-party democracy, sovereignty of the people and national unity) that could be addressed through constitutional amendment. Bhattarai again refused to engage in any discussion. The Maoists have a "one-point perspective," Bhattarai stated, with a single focus on the need for a constituent assembly "to decide the big concept of the future structure of our state." Unless the GON submits to that viewpoint, there is no further scope for discussion, he concluded. When Lohani then asked Bhattarai to offer more details on how the Maoists envision the constituent assembly, Bhattarai refused to discuss that either. The Maoists will discuss the details of the assembly only after the GON agrees to accept it, Bhattarai said.

[1](#)4. (C) Lohani said he concluded the session by acknowledging the "tremendous gap" between the positions of the two sides. Both sides agreed to consult with their respective leadership and make contact again in a week.

MAOIST POSITION: FACADE OR REAL DEAL?

15. (C) Lohani told the Ambassador that the GON was "taken aback" by the Maoists' categorical rejection of its proposals. He said he cannot determine whether their reaction is a facade or represents their actual "negotiating" position. The insurgents may be bluffing, he said, or they may have overestimated their own strength and expect to be able to intimidate the GON into conceding this crucial point. Whether or not the Maoists come back to the negotiating table will depend to a large degree, he said, on pressure from civil society. He expressed disappointment over the lack of support from mainstream political parties (Ref A). He believes that the political leadership actually agrees with many of the GON's proposals but is unwilling to support the GON publicly.

COMMENT

16. (C) Lohani's description of the Maoists' behavior during this most recent "negotiation" borders on the farcical. The Maoist understanding of negotiations--that the other side capitulate immediately and unquestioningly and work out the details of what it agreed to later--seems to offer little prospect for a political settlement to this costly, bloody conflict. We plan to increase our efforts to encourage civil society--which has remained largely silent--and the leaders of the mainstream political parties to adopt a more helpful public posture at this crucial juncture.

MALINOWSKI